

1980
1981
20 July 1951MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Debriefing of Returning Government Officials

PROBLEM

1. To determine whether or not CIA should continue its centralized service to the IAC Agencies, as well as CIA, of the debriefing of U. S. officials returning from abroad.

DISCUSSION

2. Since 1947 CIA has provided centrally for the debriefing of returning U. S. officials. This responsibility was, prior to reorganization, discharged by O/RE and since that time, by O/O. A survey of the experience over the last 6 months to a year and discussions with the other agencies has revealed that:

a. Debriefing of returning military personnel for military purposes has been handled by the military intelligence agencies. For the most part, Army, Navy, Air have sent one or two of their number to debriefings conducted by CIA.

b. Debriefing of State Department returning officials at the higher levels has been conducted by the State Department higher officials and policy desks for their own purposes. In many of the higher level cases and in most of the lower level cases the Intelligence Area in State has depended on CIA's debriefing program and, for lack of adequate physical facility, has preferred that the centralized debriefing in CIA continue. State attendance at CIA debriefings has averaged about 4 officers.

c. The CIA has presented for debriefing none of its officials for the past 6 months. Higher level officials in CIA have not manifested an interest in the debriefing program either in their attendance or in serving as moderators in response to frequent requests from O/O.

3. It is believed that the major objective of debriefing should be to provide an informal and intimate arrangement which will make it possible for key intelligence researchers having the greatest immediate interest and expertise to pick up through listening and extract through direct questioning information not available in the normal flow of written material. This objective, it is believed, is not being achieved today as well as it might because of

a. The relatively large number of officers in attendance

b. The presence of a large number of officers from the non-intelligence research parts of this Agency with peripheral interests in the subject matter (for the last 6 months the figures are [redacted] 50% of these officers were at the grade of GS-11 or below).

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Recommended

4. That the major objective of debriefing could be best met by requesting each agency to arrange for debriefing of its returning officials and inviting the other agencies to such debriefings. On CIA'S part this should be restricted to not more than two area or functional experts from the most concerned intelligence research office. Informal consultation with the intelligence area in the State Department indicates it is willing to do this.

5. A single officer in CIA should be assigned to arrange with the Assistant Directors offices for the selection and notification of the appropriate experts. This officer could arrange for debriefings on an interagency basis in the very few cases of returning officials from non-IAC agencies.

[redacted]